Newsletter of Deccan Birders (formerly Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh)
New Series Volume 20 Number 12 November 2023

FIELD TRIP-1: Sunday, 5th November 2023, 6.30AM: Mokila. Meeting Point: Morine Bakery, Narsingi, 5.30AM. Trip Coordinator(s): Gokul Krishna Addanki (Mobile: 99453-46585)

Mokila is a dry-deciduous scrub habitat which holds rich birding. So please come and enjoy a Sunday outing, watch some lovely birds and spend some time out in nature. Some common species found in this area: Eurasian Collared Dove, Blue-tailed Bee-eater, Small Minivet, Bay-backed Shrike, Siberian Stonechat, Eurasian Hoopoe, Wire-tailed Swallow and many more.

FIELD TRIP-2: Sunday, 26th November 2023, 6.30AM: Geological Survey of India (GSI). Meeting Point: Training Institute Gate, GSI. Trip Coordinator(s): Sathvik Reddy Nimma (Mobile: 99858-07186)

Geological Survey of India (GSI) was established on the 4th March 1851 with headquarters at Kolkata by the British mainly for coal exploration for the steam railways. It has six regions; the Southern region is headquartered at Hyderabad. It shares a common boundary with the Mahavir Harina Vanasthali Deer Park. The 300-acre campus of GSI has excellent green cover that is home to many birds and butterflies. The land forms a dry deciduous forest with large outcrops of granite at places. Biodiversity includes birds like Blue-faced Malkoha, Oriental Honey-buzzard, Francolins, Munias, Doves, raptor species etc; mammals like Mongoose; reptiles like Monitor Lizard and snakes like Vipers, Spectacled Cobra; and different species of butterflies. We have also lined up a visit to the Dr William King Geological Museum wherein lies the complete articulated skeleton of a Rhynchosaurus, the femur (thigh bone) of Kotosaurus and fossilised eggs and bones of various dinosaurs. Do bring your children!

Besides these, there are several samples of various minerals and gemstones which will be explained to you by expert Geologists. You will also be taken around a Rock Garden that showcases all types of rocks found in South India. We suggest you don't miss this extremely interesting learning experience.

Both trips will be half-day trips, so carry adequate water and breakfast/snacks, and protective gear if required. Covid protocols will be followed; please ensure you wear masks, carry a sanitiser and maintain social distancing. Non-members are most welcome; however, they are requested to contribute Rs. 100/- per person to the Deccan Birders kitty. New Deccan Birders hats and caps will be available for purchase; please come prepared!

SHINRIN YOKU!
Trip Report: Shamirpet , September 24, 2023

Vijaya & Dhiraj Kaveri

We reached the Shamirpet Deer Park around 7:15AM. Most of the members had already reached and JVD Moorty *garu* was welcoming everyone at the gate.

The weather seemed pleasant. We met a few of the other members and were super happy to see some young birders in the group accompanied by their parents.

While we waited for Neil, Moorty Sir suggested that we start birding near the main gate. After sighting a few common birds like Red-vented Bulbuls and Yellow-billed Babblers, we were lucky to spot a flock of Indian White-eyes. These hyperactive spectacled creatures were dancing around in the nearby trees and bushes and we got to observe them pretty closely.

Yellow-billed Babbler (Photo: Dhiraj Kaveri)

Indian White-eye (Photo: Dhiraj Kaveri)

Grey-breasted Prinia (Photo: Dhiraj Kaveri)

Meanwhile Neil arrived and we were all called for the official start of birding with our guides from the Deer Park, to venture into the deep green forest areas. We started walking, and heard many calls: Red-vented Bulbuls, Prinias and Sunbirds.

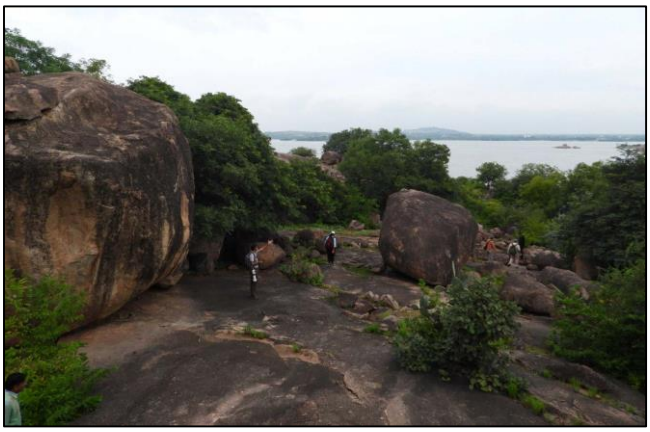
The main gate of Shamirpet Deer Park (Photo: Dhiraj Kaveri)

We got a glimpse of the Rufous Treepie and heard its calls. The sound and sight of the Golden Oriole was another exciting moment.

Indian Golden Oriole (Photo: Dhiraj Kaveri)

Asian Pied Starling (Photo: Dhiraj Kaveri)

The group during the walk (Photo: Dhiraj Kaveri)



A view of the rocky areas near Shamirpet Lake
(Photo: Dhiraj Kaveri)

After a good walk we reached the rocky edge of Shamirpet Lake. The lake view was relaxing and we took a snack break while birding.

Grey Heron (Photo: Dhiraj Kaveri)

Asian Green Bee-eater (Photo: Dhiraj Kaveri)

Here we spotted Grey Herons, Oriental Darter, various Cormorants, River Terns, White-throated Kingfisher, Baya Weaver and Asian Green Bee-eater. The youngest of the members, Siddhant, was very quick in identifying the birds correctly and we later came to know he is a student member of Deccan Birders. He was super happy and super excited to experience the deep forest and the relaxing view of the waters.

Red-wattled Lapwing (Photo: Dhiraj Kaveri)

The group at Shamirpet Lake (Photo: JVD Moorty)

Some of the birders ventured into the deeper parts and saw the Indian Silverbill nesting; we also spotted some Sunbirds, Common Kingfishers and a few other species.

Common Tailorbird (Photo: Dhiraj Kaveri)

On the way back we spotted a nest of the Common Tailorbird, and were amazed to see the meticulous stitching done by the bird. We spotted a Drongo but because of the canopy and the bird being elusive, we were not able to pinpoint if it was a Black or Ashy Drongo. According to a few members, it was Black as they couldn't see the red colour in the eye, and a couple of others thought it was Ashy Drongo because of it being so shy and hiding under the canopy unlike the Black Drongo.

The group (Photo: Dhiraj Kaveri)

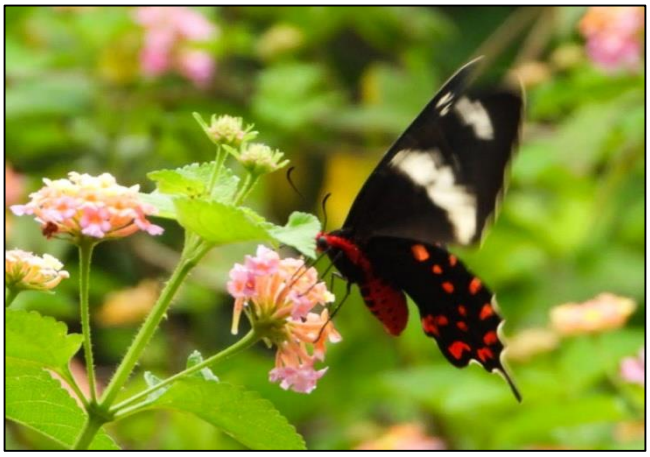
We all assembled near the entrance area again for a group photo and members dispersed after that. We were also lucky enough to listen to all the stories Moorty Sir was sharing about different birds, their names in local languages and his birding moments. Such knowledge can only be imparted from one generation to another during birding trips and this cannot come from reading a book or the information on an app. One story we laughed at the most is how some birders pointing at a tree quietly walked away, leaving others searching for the bird.

We also enjoyed Sanjay sharing the Latin names, the history behind birds' nomenclature, and some stories around the birds we spotted. A few members stayed behind to have snacks and share their bird of the day. Although we would have loved to have spent some more time with the group, we had to rush for another commitment.

I heard one of the kids say, "Wow, Dad, this is so beautiful and all this is in India!!!" We all smiled at the kid's amazement. The walk in the deep forested area and the calm waters and beautiful birds bathed us in their existence and we soaked in everything Nature had to offer.

Next time we would like to do it JVD Moorty *garu's* way: Gather, Introduce each other, then start and at the end again gather, eat together and share the experiences. Waiting for another amazing birding trip with you Moorty Sir!

(P.S.: Shinrin Yoku is the Japanese term for 'forest bathing' or taking in the forest atmosphere)



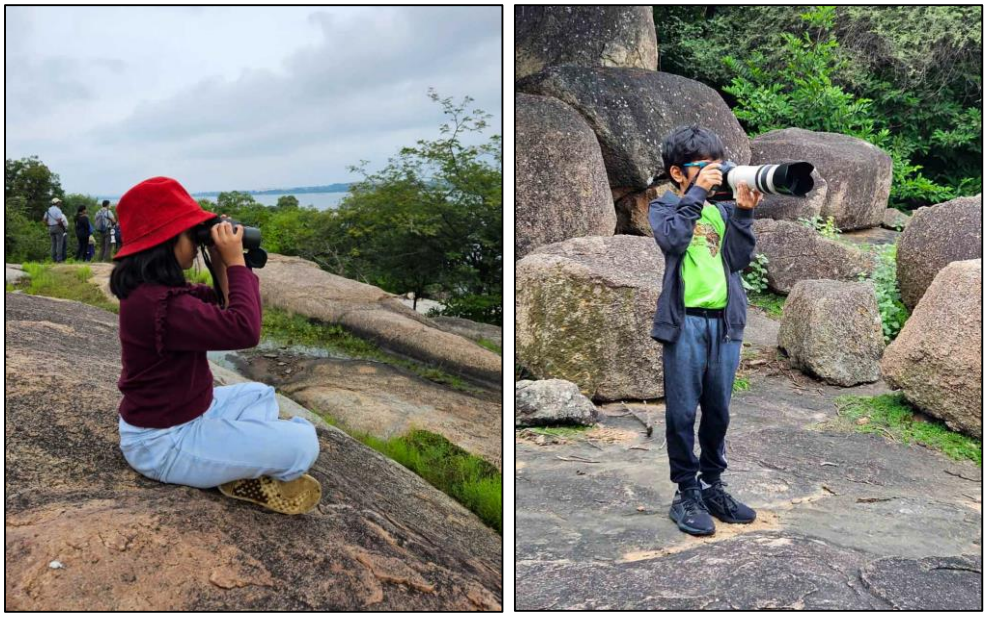
Crimson Rose (Photo: Dhiraj Kaveri)

The full list of birds seen during the trip:

Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name	Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name
1	Lesser Whistling-duck	*Dendrocygna javanica*	11	Eurasian Coot	*Fulica atra*
2	Indian Spot-billed Duck	*Anas poecilorhyncha*	12	Indian Thick-knee	*Burhinus oedicnemus*
3	Indian Peafowl	*Pavo cristatus*	13	Red-wattled Lapwing	*Vanellus indicus*
4	Eurasian Collared Dove	*Streptopelia decaocto*	14	River Tern	*Sterna aurantia*
5	Red Collared Dove	*Streptopelia tranquebarica*	15	Oriental Darter	*Anhinga melanogaster*
6	Spotted Dove	*Streptopelia chinensis*	16	Little Cormorant	*Microcarbo niger*
7	Laughing Dove	*Streptopelia senegalensis*	17	Great Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax carbo*
8	Grey-bellied Cuckoo	*Cacomantis passerinus*	18	Grey Heron	*Ardea cinerea*
9	Common Hawk Cuckoo	*Hierococcyx varius*	19	Great Egret	*Ardea alba*
10	Asian Palm Swift	*Cypsiurus balasiensis*	20	Little Egret	*Egretta garzetta*

Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name	Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name
21	Cattle Egret	*Bubulcus ibis*	41	Streak-throated Swallow	*Petrochelidon fluvicola*
22	Indian Pond Heron	*Ardeola grayii*	42	Red-vented Bulbul	*Pycnonotus cafer*
23	Striated Heron	*Butorides striatus*	43	White-browed Bulbul	*Pycnonotus luteolus*
24	Black-crowned Night Heron	*Nycticorax nycticorax*	44	Indian White-eye	*Zosterops palpebrosus*
25	Glossy Ibis	*Plegadis falcinellus*	45	Yellow-billed Babbler	*Turdoides affinis*
26	Black-winged Kite	*Elanus caeruleus*	46	Asian Pied Starling	*Gracupica contra*
27	Eurasian Hoopoe	*Upupa epops*	47	Common Myna	*Acridotheres tristis*
28	Common Kingfisher	*Alcedo atthis*	48	Asian Brown Flycatcher	*Muscicapa dauurica*
29	Asian Green Bee-eater	*Merops orientalis*	49	Indian Robin	*Saxicoloides fulicatus*
30	Coppersmith Barbet	*Psilopogon haemacephalus*	50	Oriental Magpie Robin	*Copsychus saularis*
31	Rose-ringed Parakeet	*Psittacula krameri*	51	Tickell's Blue Flycatcher	*Cyornis tickelliae*
32	Indian Golden Oriole	*Oriolus kundoo*	52	Pale-billed Flowerpecker	*Dicaeum erythrorhynchos*
33	Common Iora	*Aegithina tiphia*	53	Purple-rumped Sunbird	*Leptocoma zeylonica*
34	Black Drongo	*Dicrurus macrocercus*	54	Purple Sunbird	*Cinnyris asiaticus*
35	Rufous Treepie	*Dendrocitta vagabunda*	55	Baya Weaver	*Ploceus philippinus*
36	House Crow	*Corvus splendens*	56	Indian Silverbill	*Euodice malabarica*
37	Common Tailorbird	*Orthotomus sutorius*	57	Scaly-breasted Munia	*Lonchura punctulata*
38	Grey-breasted Prinia	*Prinia hodgsonii*	58	Grey Wagtail	*Motacilla cinerea*
39	Ashy Prinia	*Prinia socialis*	59	White-browed Wagtail	*Motacilla maderaspatensis*
40	Barn Swallow	*Hirundo rustica*	60	White-throated Kingfisher	*Halcyon smyrnensis*

Looking for water birds at Shamirpet Lake (Photo: Dhiraj Kaveri)



The young brigade in action (Photos: Dhiraj Kaveri)

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Trip Report: Namdapha National Park, Arunachal Pradesh, January 2023

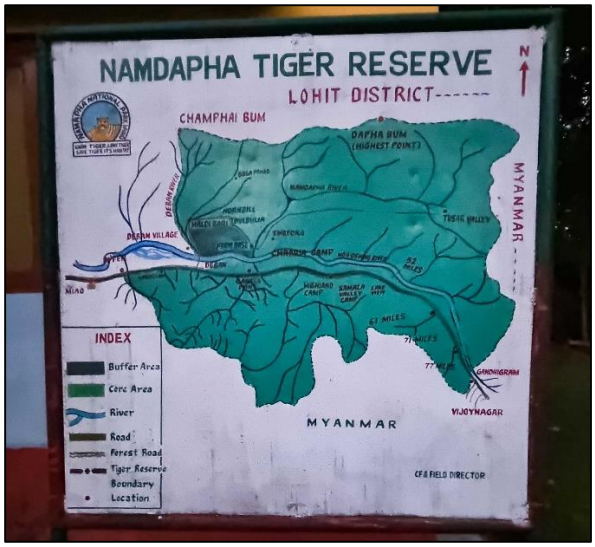
Text & Photos: Aditya Rao

A view of the early sunrise at Namdapha, *en route* to Halibari

Overview

Namdapha is one of the largest national parks in India, covering close to 2000 sq km of protected sub-montane, tropical forests of North-east India. Situated in the Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh, it borders Myanmar to its east and Mishmi Hills to the north and west. Namdapha derives its name from 'Nam', meaning water, and 'Dapha' means origin – indicating that it is the source of Noa Dihing river which originates from the Dapha Bum glaciers.

The stunning tropical forests of Namdapha



A map of Namdapha Tiger Reserve put up at the guesthouse

Given that the national park covers an altitude range from 700 ft to almost 15000 ft, it supports a fantastic diversity in flora and fauna.

Sultan Tit

A fantastic view of the Noa Dihing River, with the guesthouse in the background

Silver-eared Mesia

Of course, it is known for its avian diversity; but more so known for its diversity of insect life, especially butterflies – the Forest Department hosts the Namdapha Butterfly Meet every year, and about 250+ species of butterflies are regularly recorded.

Cruiser

Punchinello

The trip we took in January 2023 included a stopover at Maguri Beel in Tinsukia, Assam, which was our base camp before heading out to Namdapha by road.

Clear-winged Forest Glory (aka Clear-winged Flash-wing)

Black-chinned Yuhina

Sunrise at Maguri Beel

Reaching Namdapha:

Namdapha is as east as you can go in India and can be reached easily from Dibrugarh, which is approximately 150km and a 4-hour journey away. Given that it is a tiger reserve, advance booking of the lone forest guest house is mandatory; it is recommended that you plan well ahead.

The solar-powered guesthouse run by the Forest Department

Namdapha is inaccessible post rains and the parks are closed from May to October. The ideal time to visit would be between December and February, as this period brings a lot of winter migrants.

White-tailed Flycatcher

Hill Prinia

Apart from being a birding paradise, the National Park is known to house four big cats – Snow Leopard, Clouded Leopard, Common Leopard and Bengal Tiger. Most recently, night driving in the forests has been curtailed due to regular sightings of tigers prowling in the lower reaches of the forests. Other important mammals are Hoolook Gibbon and Red Panda.

Yellow-bellied Fantail

And, of course, the Namdapha Flying Squirrel (*Biswamoyopterus biswasi*), said to be endemic to the forests, and known from a single specimen collected in 1981. It is very similar to the Red Giant Flying Squirrel (*Petaurista petaurista*) which can be found in the forests on a regular basis, but it is now presumed extinct due to lack of any sightings over a prolonged period.

Red Giant Flying Squirrel

On returning from Namdapha, we spent a couple of days at Maguri Beel at Tinsukia, Assam to observe and record birds from the vast grasslands and swamplands which are part of the Dibru Saikhowa National Park.

Early morning birding at the grasslands abutting the Brahmaputra River

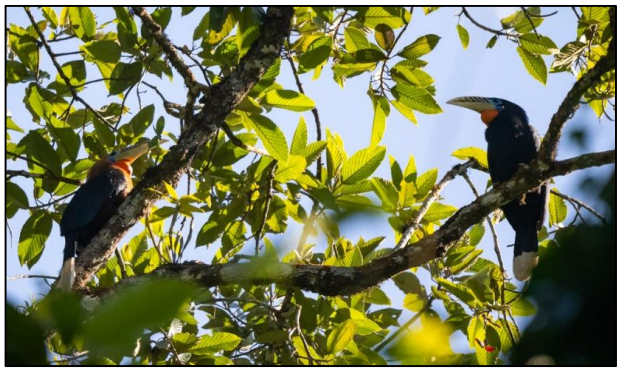
The full list of birds seen during the trip is given below:

Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name	Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name
1	Verditer Flycatcher	*Eumyias thalassinus*	**46**	Black-throated Sunbird	*Aethopyga saturata*
2	Pale Blue Flycatcher	*Cyornis unicolor*	**47**	White-capped Redstart	*Phoenicurus leucocephalus*
3	Beautiful Nuthatch	*Sitta formosa*	**48**	Plumbeous Redstart	*Phoenicurus fuliginosus*
4	Nepal Fulvetta	*Alcippe nipalensis*	**49**	Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher	*Ficedula strophiata*
5	Whiskered Yuhina	*Yuhina flavicollis*	**50**	Slaty-backed Forktail	*Enicurus schistaceus*
6	Yellow-bellied Warbler	*Abroscopus superciliaris*	**51**	Spotted Forktail	*Enicurus maculatus*
7	Bianchi's Warbler	*Phylloscopus valentini*	**52**	White-crowned Forktail	*Enicurus leschenaulti*
8	Blue-eared Barbet	*Psilopogon duvaucelii*	**53**	Little Forktail	*Enicurus scouleri*
9	Brown Hornbill	*Anorrhinus austeni*	**54**	Blue Whistling Thrush	*Myophonus caeruleus*
10	Pin-tailed Green Pigeon	*Treron apicauda*	**55**	Small Niltava	*Niltava macgrigoriae*
11	White-tailed Flycatcher	*Cyornis concretus*	**56**	White-crested Laughingthrush	*Garrulax leucolophus*
12	Slaty-bellied Tesia	*Tesia olivea*	**57**	Rufous-backed Sibia	*Leioptila annectens*
13	Bronzed Drongo	*Dicrurus aeneus*	**58**	Rusty-fronted Barwing	*Actinodura egertoni*
14	Common Merganser	*Mergus merganser*	**59**	Blue-winged Minla	*Actinodura cyanouroptera*
15	White Wagtail	*Motacilla alba*	**60**	White-hooded Babbler	*Gampsorhynchus rufulus*
16	Asian Fairy Bluebird	*Irena puella*	**61**	Grey-throated Babbler	*Stachyris nigriceps*
17	Siberian Stonechat	*Saxicola maurus*	**62**	Brown-crowned Scimitar Babbler	*Pomatorhinus phayrei*
18	Blue Rock Thrush	*Monticola solitarius*	**63**	Black-chinned Yuhina	*Yuhina nigrimenta*
19	Hodgson's Redstart	*Phoenicurus hodgsoni*	**64**	Rufous-headed Parrotbill	*Psittiparus bakeri*
20	Large Niltava	*Niltava grandis*	**65**	Rufous-faced Warbler	*Abroscopus albogularis*
21	Silver-eared Mesia	*Leiothrix argentauris*	**66**	White-throated Bulbul	*Alophoixus flaveolus*
22	Long-tailed Sibia	*Heterophasia picaoides*	**67**	Hill Prinia	*Prinia superciliaris*
23	Blue-winged Laughingthrush	*Trochalopteron squamatum*	**68**	Sultan Tit	*Melanochlora sultanea*
24	Rufous-throated Fulvetta	*Schoeniparus rufogularis*	**69**	Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher	*Culicicapa ceylonensis*
25	Large Scimitar-Babbler	*Erythrogenys hypoleucos*	**70**	Yellow-bellied Fantail	*Chelidorhynx hypoxanthus*
26	White-throated Fantail	*Rhipidura albicollis*	**71**	Collared Treepie	*Dendrocitta frontalis*
27	Maroon Oriole	*Oriolus traillii*	**72**	Hair-crested Drongo	*Dicrurus hottentottus*
28	White-bellied Erpornis	*Erpornis zantholeuca*	**73**	Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo	*Dicrurus remifer*
29	Long-tailed Minivet	*Pericrocotus ethologus*	**74**	White-browed Shrike-babbler	*Pteruthius aeralatus*
30	White-browed Piculet	*Sasia ochracea*	**75**	Scarlet Minivet	*Pericrocotus speciosus*
31	Pied Kingfisher	*Ceryle rudis*	**76**	Short-billed Minivet	*Pericrocotus brevirostris*
32	Crested Serpent Eagle	*Spilornis cheela*	**77**	Grey-chinned Minivet	*Pericrocotus solaris*
33	Great Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax carbo*	**78**	Oriental Hobby	*Falco severus*
34	Common Sandpiper	*Actitis hypoleucos*	**79**	Blue-throated Barbet	*Psilopogon asiaticus*
35	Little Ringed Plover	*Charadrius dubius*	**80**	Wreathed Hornbill	*Rhyticeros undulatus*
36	Long-billed Plover	*Charadrius placidus*	**81**	Besra	*Accipiter virgatus*
37	Orange-bellied Leafbird	*Chloropsis hardwickii*	**82**	Crested Goshawk	*Accipiter trivirgatus*
38	Black-backed Forktail	*Enicurus immaculatus*	**83**	Common Myna	*Acridotheres tristis*
39	Grey-headed Parrotbill	*Psittiparus gularis*	**84**	Ashy Bulbul	*Hemixos flavala*
40	Chestnut-crowned Warbler	*Phylloscopus castaniceps*	**85**	Red-vented Bulbul	*Pycnonotus cafer*
41	Whistler's Warbler	*Phylloscopus whistleri*	**86**	Grey-backed Shrike	*Lanius tephronotus*
42	Grey-cheeked Warbler	*Phylloscopus poliogenys*	**87**	Ashy Drongo	*Dicrurus leucophaeus*
43	Rufous-necked Hornbill	*Aceros nipalensis*	**88**	Greater Flameback	*Chrysocolaptes guttacristatus*
44	White-rumped Munia	*Lonchura striata*	**89**	River Lapwing	*Vanellus duvaucelii*
45	Streaked Spiderhunter	*Arachnothera magna*	**90**	Mountain Imperial Pigeon	*Ducula badia*

Some other photographs taken during the trip:

Brown Hornbill

Wreathed Hornbill



Rufous-necked Hornbill

Spotted Forktail

Little Forktail

White-crowned Forktail

Slaty-backed Forktail

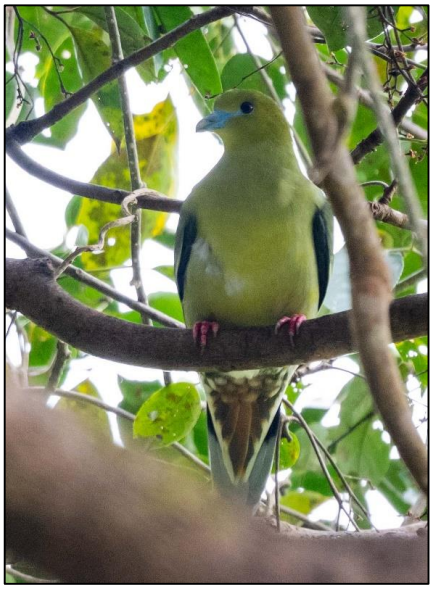
Black-backed Forktail

White-browed Piculet

Greater Rufous-headed Parrotbill

Black-throated Sunbird

Oriental Hobby

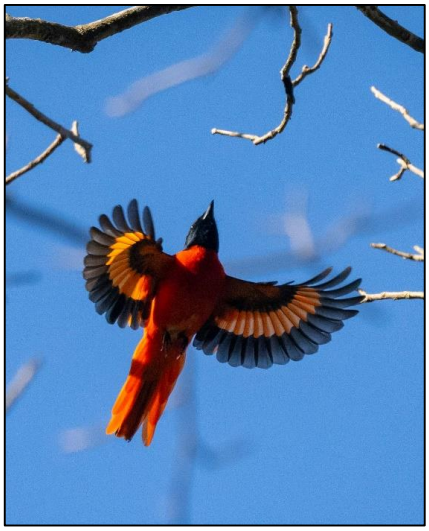


Pin-tailed Green Pigeon

Collared Treepie

Rufous-backed Sibia

Small Niltava



Scarlet Minivet

Rufous-faced Warbler

Long-billed Plover

White-hooded babbler

Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher

Plumbeous Water Redstart

Hodgson's Redstart

White-capped Water Redstart

Long-tailed Sibia

Maroon Oriole

Bianchi's Warbler (vagrant)

Orange-bellied Leafbird

Asian Fairy Bluebird

White-throated Bulbul

Sultan Tit

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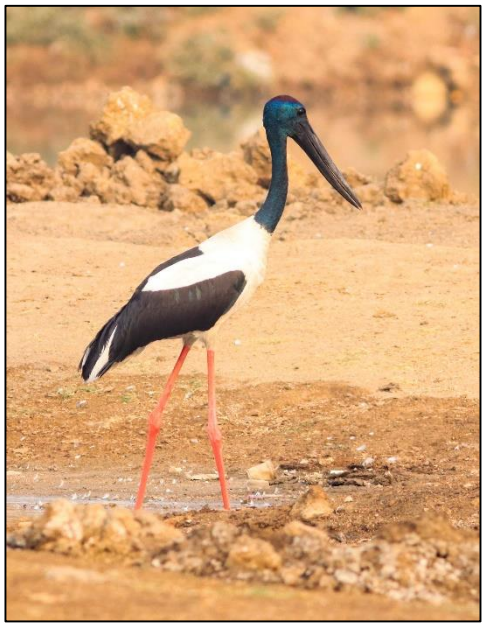
Bird of the Month

Text and Photos: Umesh Mani

Black-necked Stork (*Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*)



Black-necked Stork (Jamnagar, Gujarat, February 4, 2019)

Order: Ciconiiformes
Family: Ciconiidae
Genus: *Ephippiorhynchus*
Species: *E. asiaticus*
Size: 129-150 cm

Description & distribution: The Black-necked Stork is a large, long-necked member of the stork family. It is easily recognized: The adult bird has a glossy, iridescent bluish-black head, neck, secondaries and tail, coppery-brown crown, white back and belly, black bill with a slightly concave upper edge, and bright red legs. The sexes are similar, but the irises are differently coloured – brown for the male and yellow for the female. Juveniles below six months look fluffy and show marked brownish colour on head, neck, back, wings and tail, along with a white belly and dark legs. Iris is brownish and the bill is straight and smaller than the adult.

Juveniles older than six months show a mottled appearance, especially on the head and neck, due to the iridescence being partly developed. They also show dark-brown outer primaries, white inner primaries that form a shoulder patch when wings are closed, bill as heavy as adults but still straighter, and dark to pale-pink legs. In flight, like most storks, the Black-necked Stork flies with neck outstretched; it also shows some distinctive signs, like a black bar running through its white wings, contrasting with black neck and tail.

It is a widespread resident breeder in India, its range extending from the west and central highlands east across the northern Gangetic plains into Assam, and into parts of peninsular India and Sri Lanka. It also breeds in central lowland Nepal. There are sporadic reports from southern and eastern Pakistan. Besides, it extends across Southeast Asia, New Guinea and into the northern half of Australia, which hosts the largest population of this bird.

Habitat & behaviour: The Black-necked Stork inhabits a variety of natural and artificial wetland habitats: natural freshwater bodies like lakes, ponds, swamps and marshes, flooded grasslands, oxbow lakes, wet meadows and rivers, as well as artificial habitats like flooded wheat or paddy fields, irrigation storage canals or ponds, sewage ponds and dry floodplains. They are also sometimes seen in small numbers in coastal areas like mangroves and marshes.

It is not very gregarious, and is usually seen singly or in pairs, widely scattered across its feeding grounds while foraging. Although predominantly diurnal, it has been known to forage at night. It is a carnivore, and its diet includes water-birds such as Coot, Darter, Little Grebe, Northern Shoveller, Pheasant-tailed Jacana, as well as a range of aquatic vertebrates including fish, amphibians, reptiles and invertebrates like crabs and molluscs. In well-protected wetlands, both in Australia and India, Black-necked Storks feed almost exclusively on fish, but in agriculture-dominated Uttar Pradesh, they feed on a wider range of prey.

Its flight is slow and ponderous, and on hot days, it is sometimes seen soaring on thermals or resting on its hocks. They are usually quite silent, like most Storks, except at nest, where they often make bill-clattering sounds. Juveniles sometimes call using a series of warbling, high-pitched series of whistles, accompanied with open, quivering wings, especially while begging for food.

Nesting: The Black-necked Stork breeds generally between August and January, with some local variations. The dance-

like breeding display entails a pair stalking up to each other face to face, extending their wings and fluttering the wing tips rapidly and advancing their heads until they meet, then clattering their bills and walking away. The display, lasting a minute or so, may be repeated several times. The nest is large, sometimes 3-6 feet across, and consists of branches and twigs, lined with reeds, grass, water plants, sometimes with mud plaster on the edges. It is usually built on trees in secluded parts of marshes or in cultivated fields in India and central Nepal. The usual clutch consists of 1-5 (but usually 4) dull white, broad oval eggs. Nesting, incubation and parental duties are shared by both parents. Food is brought by the parents and regurgitated to feed the nestlings. Fledging success rate increases in years with higher rainfall, with the typical number of 1-3 surviving chicks going up even to 5 in good years.

Local name: The Black-necked Stork is known as *'Banaras', 'Loharjang'* or *'Loha sarang'* in Hindi, *'Pedda nalla konga'* in Telugu, *'Periya narai'* in Tamil and *'Lohar jangh'* or *'Loha jangha'* in Bengali.

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Bird Humour

Umesh Mani

(Received on WhatsApp, November 28, 2021)

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